

In a Statement, the Venezuelan Government Congratulated the Iranian Nation on Masoud Pezeshkian's Victory in Iran's 14th Presidential Election and Expressed Caracas's Readiness to Strengthen Fraternal Ties in This New Era

IRAN NEWS

The President of Pakistan Congratulated Masoud Pezeshkian on His Victory in Iran's Presidential Election and Expressed Hope That the Relations Between the Two Countries Will Become Stronger in the New Era

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Canada Follows Path of Terrorists With Anti-Iran Actions



TEHRAN - Iran's interim foreign minister on Friday said Canada "followed the path of terrorists" with its hostile moves of denying Canada-based Iranians their right to vote and blacklisting Iran's anti-terror Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC).

Ali Bagheri Kani made the remarks in Tehran after casting his vote in the Islamic Republic's run-off presidential election.

"Terrorists have always confronted democracy, and Canada, with its two moves of placing the name of the IRGC in its list of terrorist groups and refusing to allow Iranians to participate in elections and exercise their right to self-determination, followed the same path," he said.

Ottawa's blacklisting of the Corps "which took place in alliance with terrorists and Zionists," and its "full-fledged" confrontation against the Iranians' right to vote, come while Ottawa lays claim to honoring human rights, Kani reminded.

Canada broke off diplomatic ties with Iran and closed its Tehran embassy in a surprise move in 2012, citing various reasons, including Iran's support for Syria, its nuclear work, and alleged threats to the Israeli regime. It designated the IRGC, which is credited for its domestic and regional anti-terror endeavor, as a "terrorist organization" under its "Criminal Code" on June 19.

It also bans Iranians from casting absentee ballots in the Islamic Republic's elections, forcing them to do so in the US border cities of Buffalo and Seattle.

Ottawa's adversarial stance comes while it has crossed out the anti-Iran terrorist Mujahedin-e-Khalq Organization (MKO) in its list of terrorist organizations.

Bagheri Kani also noted how some other Western countries had also failed to protect the Iranians' right to participate in the first round of the presidential polls, which were held last Friday, by allowing anti-Iran elements to harass the voters.

He pointed out how some "subversive and terrorist" elements had been allowed to exercise verbal and sometimes even physical violence against the voters, denouncing the incidents as "unjustifiable."

U.S. Nuclear Missile Program Costs Soar to Around \$160b



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The costs of a U.S. nuclear missile development program have gone above what was estimated, reaching around \$160 billion, according to a report.

Reuters quoted three sources familiar with the cost of an Air Force program aimed to replace America's aging nuclear missiles that the price tag for the project has risen from \$95.8 billion to about \$160 billion.

The new project, named the Sentinel intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) program, is designed and managed by the Virginia-based leading provider of manned air systems, Northrop Grumman Corp.

Both Northrop Grumman and the Pentagon declined to comment on the last figure.

However, the Pentagon said a new estimate of the cost of the project will be released around Tuesday.

U.S. Air Force's top brass insist the project is crucial for maintaining the United States' global military deterrent.

U.S. arms manufacturers have been asked to advise the Pentagon on the costs of a service life extension program for the existing inventory of Minuteman III missiles, according to documents seen by Reuters.

Two of the sources familiar with the matter said the increased costs are putting pressure on other Air Force priorities such as the Next Generation Air Dominance fighter jet program.

Hypersonic weapons development, various space initiatives such as Star Wars, and the manufacture of the new B-21 Raider stealth bomber capable of carrying a nuclear payload could be affected by the increased costs, according to the sources.

Hundreds of millions of dollars of the US military budget are allocated to sending weapons to Ukraine and Israel and pushing back against China's plans in the Indo-Pacific region.

Pezeshkian Elected as Iran's New President



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - Veteran parliamentarian Masoud Pezeshkian has won Iran's runoff presidential vote, the interior ministry says, bringing a conclusion to a tight race that saw voters swell polling stations on Friday.

Pezeshkian received more than 16 million votes against former nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili with more than 13 million out of over 30 million votes cast, electoral authorities said.

"By gaining a majority of the votes cast on Friday, Pezeshkian has become Iran's next president," the interior ministry said.

The runoff on Friday followed a June 28 ballot in a snap election to find a successor to President Ebrahim Raisi who lost his life with his foreign minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian and others in a helicopter crash in northwest Iran.

Pezeshkian originally ran against a field of five candidates last week, winning the largest number of votes but falling short of a majority which sent him and Jalili to a second round.

In his first message after the election win, Pezeshkian thanked Iranians who came to vote "with love and to help" the country.

Electoral authorities put participation in the runoff election at around 50 percent. A heart surgeon by profession, Pezeshkian entered politics first as the country's deputy

health minister and later as the health minister.

In 2006, Pezeshkian was elected as a lawmaker representing Tabriz in northwest Iran. He later served as a deputy parliament speaker described by many as an "independent" politician, a label that was embraced by Pezeshkian in the campaign.

Pezeshkian in a message said he would "extend the hand of friendship to everyone" in his first remarks since being declared winner of a runoff vote against former nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili.

"We will extend the hand of friendship to everyone; we are all people of this country; we should use everyone for the progress of the country," Pezeshkian said on national television on Saturday.

Later, he took to X to thank the Iranian people for putting their trust in him, pledging not to let them.

"Dear people of Iran, the elections are over and this is just the beginning of our togetherness. The difficult path ahead will not be smooth except with your companionship, empathy and trust. I extend my hand to you and I swear on my honor that I will not leave you alone on this path. Don't leave me alone."

Leader's Message to the 58th Meeting of the Students in Europe



TEHRAN - In a message to the fifty-eighth meeting of the Union of Islamic Student Associations in Europe, Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Khamenei emphasized the role and impact of these students on major issues in today's complex world, relying on their motivation, faith, and self-confidence.

The text of the message from the Leader of the Islamic Revolution is as follows:

Dear students! Your deep-rooted and reputable union and the continuation of its activities are promising phenomena. This collective presence can, to its extent, play a role in the complex issues of today's world. Influence on major issues relies more than anything on the motivation, faith, and self-confidence of the active participants; and this valuable asset is thankfully evident among you young, faithful, and revolutionary Iranians.

You are aware of the important and fresh and old wounds of the world. The most recent one is the unparalleled disaster in Gaza. The most prominent ones are the moral, political, and social failures of the West, Western politicians, and Western civilization. The most instructive one is the incapacity of the proponents of liberal democracy to establish freedom of speech and their fatal neglect of economic and social justice. The dim but hopeful spark of popular, especially student, protests in the US and Europe is also among the significant current issues. The West Asian region and our dear country also face numerous small and large issues. All of these provide grounds for thought, work, and innovation for a blessed group like your union.

Iran Reaffirms Sovereignty over Persian Gulf Trio Islands

TEHRAN (Tasnim) - The Iranian ambassador to the UN rejected the Arab League's baseless allegations against Iran's sovereignty over Abu Musa, Greater Tunb, and Lesser Tunb in the Persian Gulf, describing the three islands as territorial soil of Iran. In a letter for UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and President of the UN Security Council Vassily Nebenzia on July 5, Saeed Irvani reiterated Iran's indisputable territorial sovereignty over the three islands. "Upon instructions from my Government, I am writing to you concerning the declaration of the League of Arab States annexed to the letter dated 20 May 2024 from the Permanent Representative of Bahrain to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council (A/78/896-S/2024/397). The Islamic Republic of Iran strongly condemns and categorically rejects the unjustified and baseless allegation against its sovereignty and territorial integrity in Paragraph 11 of the League of Arab States' declaration and considers it a flagrant and unjustified interference in its internal affairs. This action directly contradicts the spirit of good neighborliness and constitutes a blatant violation of the fundamental principles of international law and the United Nations Charter, particularly the well-established principles of sovereign equality and non-interference in internal affairs. The Islamic Republic of Iran reaffirms its sovereignty over the Iranian islands of Abu Musa, Greater Tunb, and Lesser Tunb in the Persian Gulf," the envoy said.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran also rejects and condemns the use of a fabricated name for the Persian Gulf in Paragraphs 11 and 16 of the aforementioned declaration. Iran reiterates that "The Persian Gulf" is the only legitimate and valid geographical designation for the body of water between Iran and the Arabian Peninsula, a name that has been used since ancient times. All reputable cartographic organizations recognize and refer to this marine area as the 'Persian Gulf' that must be respected by all," Irvani added.

He also asked the UN to present the letter circulated as a document of Security Council.

Hezbollah Strikes Israeli Bases, Other Targets

BEIRUT (Dispatches) - At least two Israeli soldiers are injured after Hezbollah fighters conduct an operation against a major military installation in the occupied lands in response to acts of aggression against southern Lebanon.

Hezbollah said it launched Falaq rockets with heavy warheads targeting the headquarters of the Israeli military's 769th Brigade in Kiryat Shmona, as well as 100 salvos of Katyusha rockets targeting the headquarters of Israel's 210th division and the Kilaa air base in the Israeli-occupied Syrian Golan Heights.

Later, the group said it attacked the Zaarit barracks near the Lebanese border with Burkan rockets, another type of rocket with heavy warheads like the Falaq.

The resistance group said the rocket attack came in retaliation for the Israeli military's attacks on the southern Lebanese villages of Yohmor, Arnoun al-Shaqif and Kfar Tebnit.

The Israeli military later stated that two soldiers were wounded and a building was damaged as a result of the rocket barrage.

The regime's army added that its fighter jets struck a Hezbollah rocket launcher in Marwahin town and an observation post in Houla village in southern Lebanon.

Hezbollah also targeted an Israeli military position at Margaliot moshav in the Upper Galilee and the newly-established headquarters of the 91st Division of the Israeli military at the Eilit barracks with separate salvos of Katyusha rockets.

The resistance group also shelled the Israeli military Ramtha outpost in the occupied Lebanese Kfar Shuba hills as well as Samaqa and Ramia sites, destroying the designated targets.



Additionally, a facility housing Israeli soldiers at Shlomi town in the northern part of the Israeli-occupied territories came under a Hezbollah rocket attack.

Hezbollah has said its strikes will continue for now in retaliation for Israel's assassination of its commander Muhammad Nimah Nasser on Wednesday.

On Thursday, the resistance group said it launched more than 200 rockets and drones targeting Israeli military positions in response to the assassination.

Later on Thursday, the Israeli military said in a press statement that an officer had been killed in Hezbollah rocket fire.

Ibrahim al-Moussawi, a member of Loyalty to Resistance parliamentary bloc in Lebanon, stated that Hezbollah's strikes will go beyond expectations.

Hezbollah and Israel have been exchanging deadly fire since early October last year, shortly after the regime launched a genocidal aggression against the Gaza Strip following a surprise operation by the Palestinian Hamas resistance group. The Lebanese resistance movement has vowed to keep up its retaliatory attacks as long as the Tel Aviv regime continues its Gaza war, which has so far killed at least 38,011 Palestinians, mostly women and children, and injured 87,445 others.

Hezbollah officials have repeatedly said they do not want a war with Israel, while stressing that they are prepared in case it occurs.

Hezbollah's Deputy Secretary-General Sheikh Naim Qassem said on Thursday that an expanded war with Israel is not likely soon, but his group is fully prepared for the worst-case scenario. "The movement does not build its military position according to political analyses, but rather according to information and field results," he told the Arabic service of Russia's Sputnik radio station.

IRAN NEWS



Chinese Wagons to Arrive in Tehran by Next Year

TEHRAN (ISNA) - The CEO of Tehran Metro emphasized facilitating the construction of the national train and announced that the metro currently holds a 10% share in public transportation. He stated that this share must be increased to 70% as mandated. Masoud Dorosti, speaking at a specialized seminar on various aspects of the project for constructing new lines in the Tehran Metro network, organized by the Tehran Metro Company, said: "Today, we are gathered to discuss the reasons and methods for completing the Tehran Metro network. Currently, the metro accounts for less than 10% of transportation in Tehran, while the total share of public transportation in moving citizens is less than 25%. To enhance the metro's status, we need to undertake significant efforts."

Iran Ready to Cooperate in Establishing a Genetic Bank in Turkey



TEHRAN - The head of Iran's Legal Medicine Organization, noting that the genetic bank is one of the country's prides, stated that Iran's forensic medicine has extensive experience in the field of genetic information banks and is ready to cooperate with Turkey in establishing a genetic bank there.

Abbas Masjedi, in a meeting with Yüksek, the head of Turkey's Legal Medicine, said: "The genetic bank in Iran has been successfully established and is currently operational. The genetic profiles of repeat offenders are stored in the bank, and there are plans to store the profiles of individuals in high-risk occupations such as journalists, firefighters, and pilots."

He mentioned the activities of 10 genetic hubs in Iran and added: "After the production of genetic kits by the Forensic Medicine Research Center, the activities of the bank accelerated. In addition to localizing genetic kits and some laboratory equipment, the bank's software is also entirely indigenous."

Providing explanations about the structure of Iran's forensic medicine, Masjedi continued: "Iran's forensic medicine is an independent organization operating under the Chief Justice and, according to the parliament's resolution, is a scientific and service-oriented organization. Of its five main tasks, two are specialized in providing services to the public, and three are scientific and educational."

He emphasized: "Forensic medicine is the only organization within the judiciary that has an academic board. Given the advancements in recent years, as acknowledged by high-ranking judicial officials, the expert opinions of this organization are currently definitive and an integral part of judicial cases."

The head of the Legal Medicine Organization added: "Iran's forensic medicine has three deputy offices, with the most significant services provided in clinical examinations, encompassing a wide range of services." Highlighting the organization's scientific growth, Masjedi said: "One notable action of Iran's forensic medicine is the detection of staged accidents, significantly aiding insurance companies."



First Home-Made Sophisticated Satellite to Be Operational Soon

TEHRAN - The Minister of Communications announced that the first sophisticated satellite made in Iran will be operational within the next month. Isa Zarepour, the Minister of Communications and Information Technology, discussed the latest status of the Pars 1 sensing satellite. He stated, "After the successful launch of Pars 1, all of its subsystems were individually tested, and the tests were successfully passed." He added, "This satellite is in its final stage, and we hope its data will soon be utilized." Regarding the launch time and the satellite's placement in orbit, the Minister of Communications and Information Technology said, "We hope this satellite will be operational within a month, and we will be able to use its spatial capacity and data, including images and other payloads." Zarepour pointed out that the Pars satellites are sensing satellites, and their image data will be utilized within the country. He explained, "In addition to regular black and white images (with an imaging accuracy of 8 meters), this satellite also has night vision capabilities." In conclusion, the Minister of Communications noted, "Although the image accuracy of the Pars satellite is not as high as that of the Khayyam satellite, it is the first sophisticated satellite made in Iran, carrying multiple payloads that have each been individually tested and evaluated."



TEHRAN - The Conference on the Development of Iran-India Trade Relations Forum was held by the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture and the Iran-India Joint Chamber of Commerce.

In this meeting, Ebrahim Jamili, President of the Iran-India Joint Chamber of Commerce, said: "We pay attention to India, and for this reason, we are seeking to facilitate joint investment opportunities. These opportunities must be introduced to economic activists, and the economic capacities of both countries must be recognized, and we must understand how to re-export to India during the sanctions period." Jamili spoke about monetary transfers: "For the transfer of rupees and rials, the central banks of the two countries must facilitate, and we should strive to ensure that the currency reaches exporters at its real value." He emphasized: "We are working to solve the problems of Iranian and Indian traders because it is the duty of the Iran-India Joint Chamber to identify and address these issues."

Rudra Gaurav Shresth, the Indian Ambassador to Iran, spoke about the historical, cultural, and commercial relationship between the two countries: "India and Iran have a long-standing historical interaction. For six centuries, the official language of India was Persian, which shows the depth of historical relations. Iran and India have had trade relations throughout history, and the economies of the two countries complement each other." The Indian Ambassador to Iran stated: "The two countries can work together in various fields. Iran is the closest economy to India. South Asian countries produce similar products, and the markets of neighboring countries are not suitable for Indian exports, but Iran's economy is rich and diverse. The agricultural products produced in Iran are different from those in South Asia."

He mentioned the export of energy from Iran to India: "In 2018, India bought about \$11 billion of oil from Iran, but this figure decreased with the start of sanctions in 2019. However, there are other items that traders can consider." The Indian Ambassador continued: "Iranians should look at the current conditions of

India. In the past, we were a Western colony, but now India's production and economy have grown. Previously, colonialists were against the country's industry, so India's economy was mostly agriculture-based. Now the situation has changed. Today, India is the third-largest economy in the world, and what should be noted by Iran is the proximity of India's economy to Iran's economy." He continued: "India's GDP grew by \$800 billion last year, but this growth in trade was low. We benefit from trade, and Iran has an important economy. There are many opportunities for both countries to utilize." The Indian Ambassador to Iran stated: "If Iran's economy were not under sanctions, the trade volume between the two countries could reach \$16 billion, but now this number is \$2 billion." He referred to the situation of the Indian market: "In India, the middle class and the poor class are growing, and processed agricultural products and fruits are included in their consumption basket, which increases the opportunity for interactions." According to the Indian Ambassador to Iran, one of the biggest problems in the trade route between the two countries is the lack of banking interactions and payment mechanisms. Previously, the rupee-rial system worked well. India bought oil and deposited rupees in Indian banks, and Iran imported rice, bananas, sugar, and pharmaceutical goods, but this situation changed with the onset of secondary sanctions. We are still trying to focus on non-sanctioned goods and can even concentrate on oil.

He continued: "There is a capacity for cooperation and investment in the economies of the two countries. India's economy is service-oriented; we are strengthening investment in infrastructure, logistics, transportation, and airports, which is a good opportunity for Iranian investment. On the other hand, Iran is the most important and logical transit route for Indian goods to countries like Armenia, Azerbaijan, etc. We are interested in cooperating in the international corridor and investing in Chabahar port. Iran plays a transit role between India and other countries, and this capacity is a platform for joint investment. A mechanism for joint investment should be prepared."

Exports from Jolfa Customs Increased by 138%



TABRIZ (IRNA) - The Director General of Jolfa Customs has announced a 138 percent increase in the value of goods exported from this customs in the first quarter of this year compared to the same period last year.

Iraj Jabari said: "In the first quarter of last year, 61,381 tons of goods worth \$36,715,831 were exported from Jolfa Customs. The exports in the first quarter of this year amounted to 109,147 tons worth \$87,303,320."

He also reported that 68,865 tons of goods worth \$183,474,945 were imported through Jolfa Customs in the first quarter of this year, indicating a 6 percent increase in weight and a 1 percent decrease in value compared to the first quarter of last year.

Jabari stated that the foreign transit from the Jolfa origin was 131,572 tons worth \$203,330,732 in the first quarter of this year, compared to 134,273 tons worth \$189,307,348 in the same period last year, showing a 2 percent decrease in weight and a 7 percent increase in value.

Regarding foreign transit destined for Jolfa, he said that this year, 213,746 tons of goods worth \$393,164,680 were transited to Jolfa, compared to 209,742 tons worth \$404,118,560 in the first quarter of last year, indicating a 2 percent increase in weight and a 3 percent decrease in value.

The Director General of Jolfa Customs announced that the revenue of this customs in the spring of this year was 10,407,112,705,775 rials, an increase of 39 percent compared to the revenue of 7,492,470,497,357 rials in the spring of last year.

According to IRNA, Jolfa Customs, with more than a century of history and an area of 500 hectares, is one of the largest customs in the country in terms of facilities and large warehouses.

Before the establishment of the Commonwealth of Independent States, this customs was located at the end of the Soviet-Jolfa railway line, and a significant volume of imported goods entered the country through this route.

Expansion of Iran and Indonesia Relations Based on Health Tourism



TEHRAN - Deputy Minister of Tourism Ali-Asghar Shalbafian, who, along with his accompanying delegation, including Moslem Shojaei, the Director General of Foreign Tourism Marketing and Development, and private sector activists, has traveled to Southeast Asia, including Vietnam, Malaysia, and Indonesia.

This follows the unilateral visa waiver by the Islamic Republic of Iran with 28 countries and complementary actions, such as holding events to introduce Iran's tourism capacities (road show). On the sidelines of the road show this morning, which was held in Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia, with the presence of Indonesian governmental and private sector activists, Shalbafian expressed gratitude for the hospitality and significant attendance of more than 120 Indonesian tourism companies.

He described the tourism relations between the two countries as growing and active. He stated that the Islamic Republic of Iran, with its rich cultural and historical resources and specialized medical and health tourism opportunities, as well as being a mid-point destination for Hajj travelers with defined Umrah Plus tours, offers an attractive opportunity for Indonesian tourists.

Shalbafian continued: "We believe that the development of tourism not only contributes to the economic growth of countries but also strengthens cultural and social bridges between nations. In this regard, we are ready to elevate Iran and Indonesia's tourism through closer cooperation and shared experiences and knowledge." The Deputy Minister of Tourism, highlighting that the Islamic Republic of Iran has diverse tourism capacities and broad opportunities for tourism industry development, reminded: "These opportunities include investment in tourism infrastructure, the creation of accommodation and recreational centers, and the development of tourism services. Since international cooperation and experience exchange with other countries play a significant role in the development of this industry, we are prepared to offer necessary facilities and incentives to invite Indonesian investors to engage in this sector."

Tehran Housing Prices Reach 86m Tomans



TEHRAN - Data published by the Central Bank indicates that the average housing price in Tehran has reached the threshold of 86 million tomans (approx. \$1416) in June, despite a 1.4% increase in housing prices, the housing rental index increased by 3.5%.

The report "Housing Market Transactions Developments in Tehran in Iranian month of Khordad (May-June) is derived from raw statistics from the National Real Estate Transactions Registration System and prepared and published by the Economic Surveys and Policies Department of the Central Bank.

According to the Central Bank's data, in Khordad, the number of residential apartments traded in Tehran reached 3,872 units, showing a 20.6% decrease compared to the previous month but a 14.1% increase compared to June of the previous year.

Based on these statistics, in Khordad of this year, the average purchase price per square meter of residential units traded through real estate agencies in Tehran was 85 million and 910 thousand Tomans, which is 1.4% higher than the previous month and 9.7% higher than June of last year.

An analysis of the distribution of traded residential units in Tehran by building age in June 1403 indicates that out of the total 3,872 units traded this month, units up to 5 years old had the largest share at 26.7%. However, this share still shows a 1.1% decrease compared to June of the previous year.

The distribution of transactions conducted across various districts of Tehran in June 1403 shows that among the 22 districts of Tehran, District 5, with a 13.5% share of total transactions, remains the most active district, accounting for the highest number of sales contracts.

Slovak PM Makes First Public Appearance Since Assassination Attempt

BRATISLAVA (Dispatches) - Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico appeared in public on Friday for the first time since a May assassination attempt, railing in a speech against progressive ideologies and backing Hungarian leader Viktor Orban's visit to Moscow.

Fico, who is recovering after being shot four times at close range in mid-May, made his appearance at an evening ceremony marking Saints Cyril and Methodius Day, a public holiday in Slovakia. He spoke standing at a podium at a castle ruins dating back over 11 centuries.

Fico, a four-time leftist prime minister who returned to power after winning an election last September, was shot when he greeted supporters at a government meeting in the central Slovak town of Handlova, leaving him needing hours of surgery. He has been recovering at home since the end of May.

The attack has deepened the polarisation in the central European country of 5.4 million.



New PM Starmer Pledges to Rebuild Britain After Years of Chaos



LONDON (Dispatches) - Britain's new Prime Minister Keir Starmer pledged on Friday to use his massive electoral majority to rebuild the country, saying he wanted to take the heat out of politics after years of upheaval and strife.

Standing outside his new office and residence at Number 10 Downing Street, Starmer acknowledged the scale of the challenge after his party's landslide victory in a parliamentary election ended 14 years of often tumultuous Conservative government.

He warned that any improvements would take time, and he would need to first rebuild faith in politics.

"This lack of trust can only be healed by actions, not words. I know that," he said.

"Whether you voted Labour or not, in fact, especially if you did not, I say to you directly - My government will serve you. Politics can be a force for good. We will show that."

Starmer was greeted by huge cheers and took time before making his speech to shake hands with and hug aides and well-wishers who lined Downing Street - scenes that were reminiscent of Labour predecessor Tony Blair's arrival in government in 1997.

Standing behind a lectern, he said he understood that many Britons were disillusioned with politics after years of scandal and chaos under the Conservatives, who were roundly rejected in Thursday's election, suffering a historic loss.

Starmer said the rejection signalled that Britain was ready for a reset: "Because no matter how fierce the storms of history, one of the great strengths of this nation has always been our ability to navigate away from calmer waters."

The centre-left Labour won a massive majority in the 650-seat parliament, prompting Rishi Sunak's resignation on Friday morning, before Starmer went to meet King Charles and be formally named prime minister.



Philippines Turned Down U.S. Help Amid South China Sea Tensions

MANILA (Dispatches) - The Philippines has turned down offers from the United States to assist operations in the South China Sea, after a flare-up with China over missions to resupply Filipino troops on a contested shoal, its military chief said. Tensions in the disputed waterway have boiled over into violence in the past year, with a Filipino sailor losing a finger in the latest June 17 clash that Manila described as "intentional-high speed ramming" by the Chinese coast guard. The US, a treaty ally, has offered support but Manila prefers to handle operations on its own, Armed Forces Chief General Romeo Brawner told Reuters late Thursday.

"Yes, of course, they have been offering help and they asked us how they could help us in any way," he said.

"We try to exhaust all possible options that we have before we ask for help." Manila and Washington are bound by the 1951-Mutual Defense Treaty (MDT), a military pact that can be invoked in the case of armed attacks on Philippine forces, public vessels, or aircraft in the South China Sea.

Confrontations between the Philippines and China in Asia's most contested waters have increased in frequency over the past year as Beijing has pressed its claim to the waterway and Manila continued missions to bring supplies to soldiers living aboard a rusty, aging warship that it grounded on a contested shoal.



CAIRO (Dispatches) - (Reuters) - Efforts to secure a ceasefire and hostage release in Gaza gathered momentum on Friday after Hamas made a revised proposal on the terms of a deal, and Israel said negotiations would continue into next week. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the head of the Mossad intelligence agency returned from an initial meeting with mediators in Doha, the capital of Qatar, and that negotiations would continue next week.

"There are still gaps between the sides," Netanyahu's office said.

Earlier, a source in Israel's negotiating team, speaking on condition of anonymity, said there was now a real chance of achieving agreement.

Those remarks were in sharp contrast to past instances in the nine-month-old war in Gaza when Israel said conditions attached by Hamas were not acceptable.

A Palestinian official close to the internationally mediated peace efforts said the latest proposal by the militant Islamist group could lead to a framework agreement if embraced by Israel.

He said Hamas was no longer demanding as a pre-condition an Israeli commitment to a permanent ceasefire before signing an agreement, and would

allow negotiations to achieve that throughout a first six-week phase.

"Should the sides need more time to seal an agreement on a permanent ceasefire, the two sides should agree there would be no return to the fighting until they do that," the official told Reuters.

Hamas later said it rejected the presence of foreign forces in Gaza, signalling its opposition to any plan to send an international contingent to the Gaza Strip to help keep the peace in the Palestinian enclave.

The Popular Resistance Committees (PRC), a Palestinian group allied with Hamas, said separately that it would consider any international or other forces in Gaza as occupiers. Gaza health authorities say more than 38,000 Palestinians have been killed in the offensive launched in response to a Hamas-led assault on Israel last Oct. 7 in which 1,200 people were killed and over 250 taken hostage, according to Israeli tallies. The war has displaced hundreds of thousands of Gazans and caused a humanitarian crisis. It has also fuelled tension across the region, triggering exchanges of fire across Israel's northern border with Iran-backed Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Orban Talks Ukraine Peace With Putin, Stirring EU Outcry



BUDAPEST (Dispatches) - Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban held talks on a potential Ukrainian peace deal with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Friday, angering some European Union leaders who warned against appeasing Moscow and said he did not speak for the EU.

Hungary assumed the six-month rotating presidency of the bloc on Monday. Five days in and Orban has visited Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Kyiv and formed the "Patriots for Europe" alliance with other right-wing nationalists.

Then he went to Moscow on a "peace mission", days before a NATO summit that will address further military aid for Ukraine against what the Western defence alliance has called Russia's "unprovoked war of aggression".

It was the first meeting of an EU leader with Putin in Moscow since April 2022, two months after Moscow launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, and Orban's first since then, although the two have met elsewhere.

Orban's trip drew strong rebukes from fellow EU leaders and Ukraine said it had not been consulted beforehand.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said that only unity and determination within the 27-nation EU would pave the way to a just and lasting peace in Ukraine.

"Appeasement will not stop Putin," she said on X.

Putin, who received Orban in the Kremlin, said the talks had been useful, but accused Ukraine of not wanting to end the two-and-a-half-year-old war and said his own ideas on how to end the conflict - which Ukraine has said are tantamount to surrender - were the way forward.

"Their implementation, it seems to us, would make it possible to stop hostilities and begin negotiations,"

Putin told reporters.

"I have repeatedly said that we have always been and remain open to discussing a political and diplomatic settlement.

However, on the other side (of the conflict), we hear about the reluctance to resolve issues in this particular way."

Putin said last month that Russia would end the conflict, which Moscow calls a special military operation to protect its own security, if Kyiv agreed to drop its aspirations to NATO membership and hand over the entirety of four provinces claimed by Moscow - demands Kyiv swiftly rejected as unacceptable.

Ukraine sees its 10-point peace plan and a recent international summit based on it as the only realistic path, and said Orban's trip to Moscow was not coordinated with Kyiv.

"We remind you that for our state, the principle of 'no agreements on Ukraine without Ukraine' remains unshakable and (we) call on all states to observe it strictly," Kyiv's foreign ministry said in a statement.

Orban, a critic of Western military aid to Ukraine who has the warmest relations of any EU leader with Putin, said he recognised he had no EU mandate for the trip, but that peace could not be made "from a comfortable armchair in Brussels".

"We cannot sit back and wait for the war to miraculously end," he wrote on X.

Orban told reporters after the talks that Hungary viewed its temporary presidency of the EU over the "coming half a year, and the work that will be done then, as a peace mission".

"This war is also reflected in the destruction of our economic development and the decline of our competitiveness. In short, I told the President (Putin) that Europe needs peace."

Biden Digs in as Democrats Consider Forcing Him out of Presidential Race

MADISON (Dispatches) - President Joe Biden on Friday battled to put down an uprising among some Democrats pushing him to abandon his reelection campaign after a poor debate performance, vowing that "I'm staying in the race."

In a fiery speech to supporters in Wisconsin and in an ABC News interview, Biden argued he is the best Democratic candidate to prevent Republican Donald Trump from regaining the White House in the Nov. 5 election.

Biden's halting performance at his debate with Trump on June 27 raised serious concerns among some Democrats about his mental acuity and stamina at age 81.

There is a movement afoot in the party to persuade him to step aside, with critics warning he faces near-certain defeat and could drag other Democrats down with him. House Democrats and a group of senators are expected to convene on the topic when they return to Washington next week.

Some public opinion polls have shown Trump widening a lead since the debate, and a Reuters/Ipsos poll found that one in three Democrats want Biden to quit the race.

Biden rejected the movement on Friday.

"We had a little debate last week. Can't say it was my best performance. But ever since then there's been a lot of speculation. 'What's Joe gonna do? Is he gonna stay in the race? Is he gonna drop out?'" Biden said. "Well here's my answer: I am running and gonna win again."

Biden used a 22-minute ABC News interview to argue again that he simply had a bad night at the debate but was otherwise fine.

Under persistent questioning from ABC interviewer George Stephanopoulos, Biden dismissed polls that showed him trailing Trump and said other polls have him in a better position.

Asked if he had undergone a specific cognitive test for a neurological exam, Biden said he had not had one and "no one said I had to." The rigors of the White House are sufficient, he said.

In his last physical exam on Feb. 28 he was determined to be fit for duty.

Biden added he was the best candidate to take on Trump and that only "Lord almighty" could



oust him from the race.

Biden's latest efforts to convince Democrats to stick with him were dismissed by some, although he seemed determined to fight on.

"He seems not to be able to compute the fact that people have these questions about him," Democratic strategist David Axelrod, a former senior adviser to President Barack Obama, told CNN.

"It's pretty clear that he's not going anywhere unless there's a major revolt on the Hill," a senior Democratic National Committee official told Reuters.

Senator Mark Warner, a well-respected moderate Democrat, is inviting Democratic senators to a meeting on Monday to discuss Biden's campaign, a source told Reuters. The Washington Post reported Warner was seeking to ask the group to press Biden to exit the race.

Biden told reporters he had spoken to at least 20 lawmakers and that they were

telling him to stay. Asked about Warner's call for him to go, Biden said: "Well, Mark Warner, to my understanding, is the only one considering that."

At the rally, Biden said he was thankful for the support of his vice president, Kamala Harris, who has emerged as a top choice to replace him were he to step aside as the Democratic Party's standard-bearer.

One person at the Madison rally held up a sign behind Biden that said, "Pass the torch, Joe." Harris posted a supportive note on X after the rally, saying Biden had devoted his life to fighting for Americans. "In this moment, I know all of us are ready to fight for him," she said.

But Illinois Democratic Representative Mike Quigley, on MSNBC, called on Biden to step aside and "let someone else do this" or risk "utter catastrophe."

In his appearances on Friday, Biden knocked Trump's intelligence and called him a liar, delivering stinging attacks that were absent when he appeared on the Atlanta debate stage.

But he had sharper words for those in his party who doubt his ability to lead them to victory on Nov. 5.

Efforts to Secure Gaza Ceasefire and Hostage Release Gain Momentum



France Beat Portugal in Shootout to Reach Semis

HAMBURG (Dispatches) - France converted all their kicks in a shootout to edge Portugal 5-3 on penalties after a goalless stalemate in their European Championship quarter-final on Friday, likely bringing the curtain down on Cristiano Ronaldo's international career.

Theo Hernandez stroked home the winning kick for a perfect sequence after Joao Felix's effort, the third for Portugal, hit the post. France will now play Spain in the semi-finals on Tuesday in Munich.

Defeat for Portugal is set to spell the end of the 21-year international career of 39-year-old Ronaldo, who converted their first kick in the shootout but was also responsible for one of the night's many glaring misses.

Success for France makes up for shootout heartbreak at the last Euros, when they were eliminated by Switzerland in the round of 16, and in the 2022 World Cup final against Argentina.

Ousmane Dembele, Youssouf Fofana, Jules Kounde and Bradley Barcola all netted their spot kicks for victorious France.

A game that was slow in firing up ended with a myriad of missed opportunities at either end, with clear chances for both sides in 90 minutes as well as the half hour of extra time.

France now find themselves in the semis without scoring in open play at the tournament, having benefitted from two own goals and a penalty in their previous four games.

But the French have also not conceded in open play at Euro 2024 with goalkeeper Mike Maignan making two key saves in Friday's match that proved key for his side.

Both teams started cautiously, intent on keeping possession and avoiding mistakes. The play was therefore often pedestrian with only periodic bursts of action.

It took 16 minutes before the first shot was fired off in anger - Bruno Fernandes' effort hitting Hernandez and deflecting away for a corner.

Soon after the second half kicked off, the contest rose from its slumber.

A rare contribution from the masked Kylian Mbappe was a clever combination with N'Golo Kante that produced a rapid fire shot, swallowed up by goalkeeper Diogo Costa. France's captain Mbappe had another off night in attack.

Within minutes, Hernandez's square ball from the left beat the Portuguese defence as it went invitingly across goal, crying out for a tap-in but with no one to meet it.

Maignan then made two crucial saves in the space of three minutes - a stiff arm reaction to deny Fernandes on the hour, followed by a point blank stop from Vitorino after another of Rafael Leao's probing runs.

"We knew it was going to be a tough game but we were solid in defence and we had a lot of mental strength and kept our cool during the shootout, that's what made the difference," Maignan said.

Pan, Rai Share Halfway Lead in PGA John Deere Classic



LOS ANGELES (Dispatches) - C.T. Pan and Aaron Rai defied tough, gusty winds to card eight-under-par 63s on Friday and share the lead heading into the weekend at the PGA Tour John Deere Classic in Illinois.

On 14-under 128, the pair had a one-shot lead over England's Harry Hall, who had five birdies in a five-under 66 for 129.

Hayden Springer, who carded a spectacular 59 on Thursday, shot an even par 71 and was among half a dozen players sharing fourth on 12-under 130.

Taiwan's Pan, warming up for the Paris Olympics where he'll be aiming to improve on the bronze medal he won in Tokyo, was delighted with a bogey-free round in the testing conditions, highlighted by his chip-in for eagle at the 14th.

"I'm actually impressed by myself," he said. "It's pretty tough out there when the wind picks up to 15, 20 mph.

"It's totally opposite wind direction as well, so hitting different tee shot, different clubs and have different numbers for the approach shots," Pan added. "I was able to hit a lot of good iron shots to give myself birdie chances out there."

Pan, who claimed his only PGA Tour win to date at the 2019 RBC Heritage, has just one top 10 finish this year -- a tie for third at the Mexico Open.

A solid week is just what he was looking for with the Olympics starting later this month.

"I always want to get my conditioning, get my mental state ready for the Olympics," he said. "That's the biggest event for my country and for myself also."

Alcaraz Stretched, Sinner Sublime, Raducanu Roars

LONDON (Dispatches) - Defending champion Carlos Alcaraz was stretched to the limit en route to the Wimbledon fourth round but world number one Jannik Sinner, his likely semi-final opponent, was unruffled as he advanced in ominous fashion at rainy Wimbledon on Friday.

Play ended in late afternoon on most of the All England Club's courts as the heavens opened over southwest London.

But the significant action, including wins for women's second seed Coco Gauff and British favourite Emma Raducanu, went ahead under the Centre Court and Court One roofs.

The 21-year-old Alcaraz, bidding for his fourth Grand Slam title, ran into inspired American Frances Tiafoe in a repeat of their thrilling semi-final the 2022 U.S. Open.

Just as in New York, the two players traded blows in a match sprinkled with spectacular exchanges but once again it was Alcaraz who boasted the greater firepower - racking up 55 winners to Tiafoe's 39 in a 5-7 6-2 4-6 7-6(2) 6-2 win.



Put under extreme pressure by the all-action American, Alcaraz was in trouble towards the end of the fourth set but found another gear to dominate the tiebreak and then romp away to victory in the deciding set.

He has now reached at least the fourth round in 10 of his first 14 Grand Slam appearances while his record in five-setters now stands at a formidable 12-1.

"I'm playing with the statistics that I have just lost one match in the fifth set. That's an advantage for me. That's why in those situations I play at my high level," he said.

Alcaraz's day got even better as he finished in time to watch Spain beat Germany at Euro 2024, although he insisted he had not asked the schedulers for an early time slot.

Sinner no longer has an interest in the soccer after Italy's limp exit. Instead, the top seed is looking in the mood to become the second Italian to win multiple Grand Slam titles after Nicola Pietrangeli.

Spain Dig Deep to Earn Dramatic Extra Time Victory Over Germany

STUTTGART (Dispatches) - A Mikel Merino goal in the last moments of extra time gave Spain a dramatic 2-1 win over hosts Germany in an enthralling Euro 2024 quarter-final clash on Friday between the tournament's two most successful nations.

The game was into the 119th minute and looked set for a penalty shootout when substitute Merino rose to head home the winner from Dani Olmo's cross to decide an eagerly anticipated match that hit fever pitch as the teams slugged it out at a raucous Stuttgart Arena.

Spain were the better side for the first hour and wasted several opportunities before Olmo gave them a deserved lead six minutes after the break, drilling home a first-time shot into the bottom corner.

Germany coach Julian Nagelsmann made five substitutions in a desperate attempt to find the equaliser which paid dividends in the 89th minute as substitute Florian Wirtz, the Bundesliga's player of the year for champions Bayer Leverkusen, hammered home a shot from Joshua Kimmich's header to force extra time.

It was Spain, however, who found an extra gear when it mattered most to leave the German fans inside the stadium heartbroken after the hosts' gritty display fell short by the narrowest of margins.

Germany pushed hard for a late leveller and fullback Dani Carvajal was sent off after receiving a second yellow card for a foul on Jamal Musiala as he sought to avoid a counter attack.

He and centre back Robin Le Normand will now miss the semi-final, where Spain will face either Portugal or France



who play later on Friday.

Carvajal's red card was a fitting conclusion to an ill-tempered and nerve-racking encounter between two of the most impressive sides at Euro 2024. There were 38 fouls in the match and 16 bookings as referee Anthony Taylor flashed cards in an attempt to calm the situation.

Tensions were high from the first minutes following a nasty challenge by Germany midfielder Toni Kroos on Pedri who left the pitch in tears after sustaining what the Spanish FA said was a ligament injury to his left knee.

Pedri's injury forced Spain manager Luis de la Fuente into an early change, bringing Olmo, who was named player of the match with a goal and an assist, off the bench.

"I'm so proud. What a great team! What a joy! But it's not about me, it's truly everyone's tournament. The group is the most important thing," Olmo told TVE.

"Let's hope that Pedri's injury is just a blow because he is very important. This victory is for him. I hurt my calf but I took a gamble and kept on playing. The heart is always more important than the legs."

Spain had almost triple the amount of scoring attempts as Germany in the first half and kept up the pressure after the break, with Alvaro Morata missing from close range in the 47th minute.

However, after taking the lead four minutes later, Spain let Germany take control, with Julian Nagelsmann's side hoping to end a winless run at tournaments against Spain that stretched back to 1988.

UEFA Clear Manchester Clubs, Nice and Girona to Play in Europe



LAUSANNE (Dispatches) - UEFA on Friday said Manchester City and Girona can both enter the Champions League and Manchester United and Nice can play in the Europa League after addressing multi-club ownership concerns.

Premier League champions City and Girona are both part of the City Group, while Jim Ratcliffe who owns 25 percent of FA Cup winners United also controls Nice through his Ineos company.

UEFA said it had accepted the admission of the four clubs into next season's European competitions, after previously opening proceedings into them for potential conflict with its ownership rules, "following the implementation of significant changes by the concerned investors in Girona FC and OGC Nice".

"The clubs were able to demonstrate that such changes brought them into compliance with the multi-club ownership rule," UEFA's Club Financial Control Body (CFCB) said in a statement.

"No one is simultaneously involved, directly or indirectly, in any capacity whatsoever in the management, administration and/or sporting performance of more than one club participating in a UEFA club competition.

"No one has control or decisive influence over more than one club participating in a UEFA club competition.

"The significant changes made to the ownership, governance, and financial support of the concerned clubs, substantially restrict the investors' influence and decision-making power over more than one club."

It said City Group, which owned a 47 percent stake in Girona, and Ineos had transferred their shares to "independent trustees through a blind trust structure established under the supervision of the CFCB First Chamber" until July 2025.

UEFA said that the clubs had also promised not to make any new player transfers to each other, either permanently or on loan, until September 2025 and would not cooperate commercially or on coaching or scouting.